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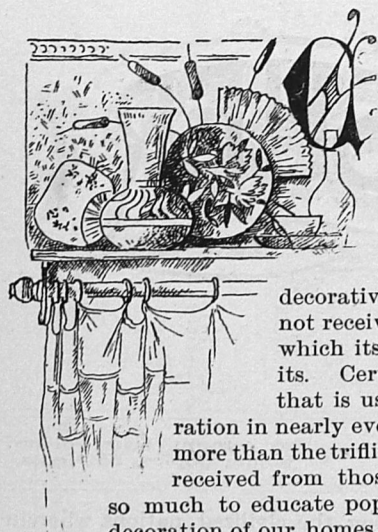
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WALL PAPER.

BY R. H. PRATT.



FTER all that has been written and said concerning interior decoration, the subject of wall papers,

decoratively considered, has not received that attention which its importance merits. Certainly a material

that is used as a wall decoration in nearly every house deserves more than the trifling attention it has received from those who have done so much to educate popular taste in the decoration of our homes. Our attention is often attracted by showy signs to inform

the public that Art Paperhangings can be had within at that establishment, and that the searcher in quest thereof can satisfy the decorative yearnings of his more or less artistic heart, and pursue his subsequent career rejoicing. Wall papers that are good, both in design and color, may be bought at almost any first-class paper hanging store, but if our knowledge of what is beautiful be not so great as our faith in the assurances of the salesman, we may have become the possessor of the "newest thing" or the "most fashionable color;" but that we have bought a really artistic covering for our walls is by no means certain. There are stores where, if one has not entire confidence in his own judgment, he may rely upon the suggestion and advice of the dealer whose taste is beyond dispute, but unfortunately this is not true of all paper stores.

The widespread and increasing interest in interior decoration now prevalent, is most encouraging to those who have written and talked in its behalf. Oftentimes their efforts have appeared in vain, but at last it seems reasonable to believe that there is a genuine awakening, and that while it is true that there are those among us who are simply following the fashion, there are also many who understand and appreciate the claim of internal ornamentation to be an art of no mean order, for that which renders our homes beautiful and consequently increases the pleasure of living in them, ought to be esteemed an art and entitled to an honored position among what is known as the Fine Arts. Among our people there is a much better understanding of what was meant by "George Eliot" when she wrote: "For it is a fatal mistake to suppose that ugliness, which is taken for beauty, will answer all the purposes of beauty."

Much has been said and many books have been published by men and women of acknowledged ability and taste, and to their efforts the present feeling is to be attributed; there should be no doubt as to the sincerity of most of these writers and lecturers. I believe that in most cases they were and still are actuated not by motives of sordid desire of gain, but from a love of art for its own sake and an earnest wish to cultivate the tastes of the public, and thereby give a means of greater enjoyment to human existence.

It is to be regretted, however, that nearly all of the ornamentation and decoration described is more or less costly, and consequently beyond the ability of many. There is a scarcity of decorative suggestion for the homes of people who are in moderate circumstances or those whose means are rather limited. This class of our population is very large, and in it is to be found as much love of the beautiful and as great a desire to have pleasing surroundings as among those persons who have more ample means, but not being able to indulge in the services of an expensive decorative artist, the middle classes have reluctantly concluded that decorative art is so costly as to be beyond their reach, and try to content themselves with a style of decoration that is very seldom to be considered as having much about it that is proper or decorative at all. With a hope to help those who are trying to help themselves, and who are not without decorative aspirations, these hints are written, not in a spirit of pedantry, but with a sincere desire to assist.

The walls of most rooms are covered with wall paper, for the reasons that paper is generally not very expensive and can be easily applied. These are very important reasons for its use, and so far wall paper is good; but when a person, possessed

of ordinarily correct ideas of decorative effect, takes into consideration the merits of the average wall paper of moderate price as decorative material, his feelings are of a rather mixed description; these bad designs and crude colorings are produced, and afflict us because of the lack of taste on the part of the buyer rather than for any other reason. Paper, good in design and color, could be furnished at the same price, but the greatest ignorance prevails as to the artistic selection and use of wall paper. Many persons rely very much upon the ideas of the "decorator" or paper hanger who, very often, is incompetent to judge, and has no artistic feeling whatever. He may think himself a very clever decorative artist, but is he very often? Is not his interest in such matters generally confined simply to the hanging of so many rolls of paper at so much per roll in the shortest possible time?

While decoration of great beauty is to be produced by the judicious use of expensive papers of all kinds, there is also decoration whose excellence is beyond question, and whose cost is so inexpensive that it is within the reach of nearly all of those who have a desire for something better than the vulgar papers and stuffs to be seen in the houses of so many, whose homes might have been beautiful instead of ugly and coarse if there had been less money spent and more taste used. This is just as true of a house as it is of an individual; poverty is no excuse for vulgarity in apparel, or coarseness in manners.

It is not always the most elaborately furnished apartments, or those upon which most money has been expended in fitting them up, that are most satisfactory in their appearance. On the contrary, sometimes a well-chosen paper and frieze of moderate cost, with curtains of simple cretonne or chintz, a modest carpet, a few appropriate ornaments, and furniture in keeping, has an effect more pleasing, if controlled by good taste, than far more costly and pretentious materials would have in ignorant hands. Fortunately for those who have taste but whose means are not large, the ratios of cost and artistic merit are not equal.

When we see so many walls covered with papers that are eyesores, and decorations that do not decorate the rooms they are expected to adorn, we may rest assured that it is because of a lack of knowledge or care, most often the former, and not entirely the result of economy.

Great difficulty is found in writing of the contrast and harmony of color in decoration of interiors; words cannot express the exact tint or shade intended: the best that can be done by books when treating on colors is to give an approximate idea, and a great deal must be left to the tasteful discrimination and knowledge of the person decorating. For instance we are told that red and green are complementary to each other, or, as we generally say, they go together; but we find that all reds do not harmoniously contrast with all greens. As far as is possible in describing color in these articles, reference will be made to some thing, or flower, whose color is familiar.

In most wall papers color is more important than design, the figure or design of a wall paper may have no especial merit, but if the colors be harmonious and appropriate to the room, the effect of the papered wall will be pleasing. The design of the pattern may be most excellent, yet if the colors be bad the beauty of the design is ruined, so that we see that the matter of color is very essential. Of course the best effect is produced by those papers which have a good design and are well colored also, but of the two good color is most necessary to good effect. There are many good patterns of wall paper, but it is sometimes hard to find satisfactory colorings.

Manufacturers of paper hangings do not always appreciate or understand how very much depends upon a knowledge of color, hence the badness of many of our cheaper wall papers. The popular paper of to-day very often presents a confused and absurd jumble of reds, blues, yellows, pinks, etc., in crude, harsh tones, with great splotches of cheap and garish gilt. Some persons buy these papers, not because they would not prefer a better design or coloring, but because they are told that "this is the style now," or often for the reason that they cannot afford to pay for a more harmoniously colored pattern. There is no reason why a paper with eight badly arranged colors should be cheaper than one with four or five colors well arranged.

It is hard to give general rules for guidance in particular cases, so many things very essential to correct and satisfactory results are to be considered, such as the amount of money to be expended, the preferences of the individual—for it should always be borne in mind that the tastes of the person or persons inhabiting a certain room should be considered, and should, provided they

do not violate artistic property, find some expression in the scheme of decoration—for unless the room be a pleasure to those who frequent or live in it, it has failed to gain the proper object of its decoration. We should endeavor to have something in our decoration that is in harmony with our feeling or personality; this can be done in almost every case, provided the occupant be a person of taste, for it seems folly to lay down certain cast-iron rules that are rigid and inflexible, there are tastes and tastes, sometimes widely different and yet each more or less good, according to the preferences of the individual.

The ideas of different persons as to what is most beautiful may not exactly agree, and yet they may not violate correct principles of ornamentation. One person prefers broad and simple effects, another of equally artistic cultivation while he admires the severe simplicity of his friend's decoration, is more fond of rich effects of color and elaborate design, a third is most pleased by delicate and soft tints of color and does not pay much attention to design provided the colors are harmonious; his ideas are also entitled to consideration and respect.

Too often the fashion is consulted by those who think that they must closely obey its dictates, no matter what absurdities are in vogue or what they may prefer personally. All that is necessary with such people is to tell them that this is considered very stylish, and that Mrs.—— has had her parlors papered with it, and a sale is made.

Many wall papers are overdone in their design as they are shown in the single roll or in small samples. There is an attempt at great elaboration of design and showiness of color, and purchasers are apt to forget that a pattern may look well in a single roll or sample, but may be disappointing in its effect when repeated many times as it must be when hung on their walls, and there is another thing that is seldom taken into consideration by purchasers; that is the lighting or aspect of the room to be papered, whether it face the north or south, east or west. The light from the northern or eastern sky is somewhat cold and bleak, consequently in choosing a paper for a room lighted from either of these directions, we should select colors that are soft and mellow, and be careful to avoid cool or very delicate colors, which are most suitable for south or west rooms where there is generally a more glowing and brighter light. A paper may be very pleasing in its design and colors, and yet unsuitable for some rooms. Much disappointment would be avoided if these things were more often borne in mind. It is a good plan to try the effect by pinning up a large piece or several pieces of the pattern one thinks of using in the room to be papered. In that way a much better idea of the effect can be obtained than by seeing it elsewhere. In the room it is seen in the light and with the surroundings it must have when hung. These things may, to some persons, seem of little importance, yet they are by no means trivial, as in many other things it is by careful attention to detail that excellence is attained.

ONE sees in walking along the streets some curious window decorations; plaques and Christmas cards, hung picture side outward, that the public may benefit by looking at them; squares of stained glass hung by wires from the catch; half windows of stained glass put behind the lower portion of a window, so that from the outside the decorative panes appear to be regarded as choice pictures that must be glazed to prevent their exposure to the air. Some people put so many of their effects in view of passers by, that it seems as if they were making an effort to "show off." There is something vulgar about this, and something destructive of the privacy of home in whatever invites public attention into the parlor and bids it make itself at home in the dining-room. Lace and Madras curtains are admirable for windows, because they are transparent from within and pleasant to view from without. Flowers beautify a window, and at the same time may be made to form a screen against intrusive observation. The love of flowers is natural and healthful, and jardinières and hanging baskets might be advantageously introduced into thousands of homes where no vestige of nature is visible, and where it is only suggested in pictures and embroideries, for the very air is hot and lifeless, and often the manners of those who occupy these homes partake of the artificiality of their environment.

SQUARE tables are popular for dining-rooms. Oak is the wood preferred.